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a suitable symbol in which to express the special relationship in which a twin stands to God. When, therefore, Nuer say that a twin is a bird they are not speaking of either as it appears in the flesh. They are speaking of the *anima* of the twin, what they call his *tie*, a concept which includes both what we call the personality and the soul; and they are speaking of the association birds have with Spirit through their ability to enter the realm to which Spirit is likened in metaphor and where Nuer think it chiefly is, or may be. The formula does not express a dyadic relationship between twins and birds but a triadic relationship between twins, birds, and God. In respect to God twins and birds have a similar character.

It is because Nuer do not make, or take, the statement that twins are birds in any ordinary sense that they are fully aware that in ritual relating to twins the actions are a kind of miming. This is shown in their treatment of the corpse of a twin, for, according to what they themselves say, what is a bird, the *tie* or *anima*, has gone up into the air and what is left and treated—in the case of adults platform burial being a convenient alternative to disposal in trees—as though it might be a bird is only the *ring*, the flesh. It is shown also in the convention that should one of a pair of twins die, the child who comes after them takes his place, counting as one of them in the various ceremonies twins have to perform and respecting birds as rigorously as if he were himself a twin, which he is not. The ceremonies have to be performed for the benefit of the living twin and their structure and purpose are such that there have to be two persons to perform them, so a brother or sister acts in the place of the dead.

This discussion of what is meant by the statement that a twin is a bird is not so far away from the subject of totemism as it might seem to be, for the stock explanation among the Nuer of a totemic relationship is that the ancestor of a lineage and a member of a natural species were born twins. The relationship of lineage to species is thereby made to derive not only from the closest of all possible relationships but also from a special act of divine revelation; and since the link between a lineage and its totem is the tutelary spirit of the lineage associated with the totem it is appropriate that the relationship should be thought of as having come about by an event which is a direct manifestation of Spirit.

However, an examination of the Nuer dogma that twins are

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SOUL AND GHOST

II

761 Two main questions arise from the account I have given of ceremonies connected with death: In what way do Nuer conceive of the disintegration of the person at death and how do they regard those who have departed? I discuss these two questions in turn, but I must say at the outset that Nuer are neither very clear nor very explicit in what they say about the matters they concern.

As I have said, Nuer avoid as far as possible speaking of death and when they have to do so they speak about it in such a way as to leave no doubt that they regard it as the most dreadful of all dreadful things. This horror of death[1] fits in with their almost total lack of eschatology. Theirs is a this-worldly religion, a religion of abundant life and the fullness of days, and they neither pretend to know, nor, I think, do they care, what happens to them after death.

761 When a man dies the flesh, the life, and the soul separate themselves out. The idea of *ring*, flesh, presents no difficulties. All creatures have *ring*, and it is what, when a man dies, is committed to the earth. *Yiegh*, life, is a more difficult concept, especially as, as will be seen, its meaning overlaps with that of *tie*, soul—they are different aspects of what in a living man is a single whole. *Yiegh* means both 'breath' and 'life'. In the sense of 'life' it may mean, according to the context, either mere life, what is common to man and all living creatures, or it may include the intellectual and moral faculties as well. At one end the meaning is much the same as *tegh*, life, in contrast to *liagh*, death, and at the other end it approximates to *tie*, the soul. A man's *yiegh* may be stronger or weaker according to circumstances. When he is drunk he is partly dead, and also when he is ill. Sleep is also a partial death, the death, Nuer say, for which people do not mourn. When a man is dying the life slowly weakens and then it departs from him altogether, and Nuer say it has gone to God from whom it came. Nuer ideas on this matter are relatively simple and also easy for us to understand. Life comes from God and to him it returns.

[1] Horror of death is probably the reason for the great reluctance with which Nuer discuss dreams, even impersonally and with reference only to stereotyped interpretations, for these only too often are prognostications of death: as when a man dreams of death, or of a fish called *rec ma car*, black fish, or of a turtle walking about which the dreamer fails to catch.

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Tie corresponds to the *anima* in scholastic writings and presents many of the difficulties of that word. It would appear to be that part of the *yiegh* which embraces the intellectual and moral faculties of man, his rational soul as distinct from his mere life as a living creature.[1] It is used in varying contexts in a variety of senses and might sometimes be translated 'cleverness', 'wisdom', and 'disposition', but the English word that best covers its general sense is 'soul'. It is true that sometimes 'life' is a more appropriate rendering than 'soul', just as *yiegh* may sometimes be more suitably translated 'soul' than 'life', but when this is so it is the psychic life rather than the animal life that is to be understood. The essential difference, in spite of mutual overlap, between the two conceptions is clearly to be seen in the already related case of Gatbuogh. He ostensibly had breath and life (*yiegh*), but what made him a person (*ran*), his soul (*tie*), had departed. Hence, although he was described as 'a living ghost' he was also said to be 'dead'. It is to be seen also in the Nuer dogma about twins, that they are one person. Ostensibly each has his independent individual life, but they have a single soul and are therefore one person. The distinction also emerges at death. The *yiegh*, the life, returns to God at the moment of death, so we may suppose—and Nuer remarks on the whole lead us to the same conclusion—that what survives death in an independent, if shadowy, existence as a ghost or shade is the *tie*, the soul. I return to this aspect of the matter later.

Associated with the *tie* is the *tiep*, the common Nilotic word for a shadow or reflection. In Nuer it may simply mean 'shade', as the shade of a tree, and also the reflection of anything in water. When used for the human shadow it might sometimes be translated 'soul', though in its general sense *tiep* cannot be equated with *tie* and when it is used in a context where we might expect *tie* to be used it would seem to be in the sense of an external representation or symbol of the soul. There may be here a merging of ideas, but Nuer are nevertheless fully aware that a man's shadow is only a reflection visible at certain times and in certain circumstances

[1] Psychical functions are associated with the head and the heart. The head is the seat of intelligence and will and by synecdoche stands for the whole person, especially when a pronominal suffix is added. The heart is similarly used as a periphrasis for the personal pronoun when a man's affections, emotions, or sentiments are referred to. (Cf. Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 1949, pp. 77–88.)

774 and is not an integral part of him. They do not attach any impor-
[196] tance to it and there are no beliefs and practices connected with it. They presumably see an analogy between a man's shadow and his soul, the shadow being the best way they can find to figure the sort of thing the soul might be. The analogy may derive from the idea of ghosts being shadowy replicas of the living. The fact that other creatures and things have shadows does not lead Nuer to say that they have souls; and since they have no souls, in their case the shadow does not at any time have a figurative meaning.

Nuer hold no decided opinions about the nature of the soul, which does not surprise us in view of their lack of interest in what happens after death, or of how there comes to be one. They know
[842] that the foetus begins as a result of the male sperm entering into the womb. The child is begotten (*dieth*) by man. But it is also created (*cak*) by God, so it appears that they think of conception as a product of this combination of human and divine action. But it does not necessarily follow that because a man is alive he has a soul. Gatbuogh was alive. So when we observe that Nuer
[858] do not mourn or hold a mortuary ceremony for a dead child, it suggests to us that either they do not think of a small child as having a soul or they regard it as immature. It is only when he begins to take part in activities of the social life that he is said to be a person (*ran*), and Nuer sometimes indicate that the sign of having become a person is the removal of the second lower incisor teeth, which is done when the child is about seven or eight years of age. On the other hand they speak of infant twins having one soul. Clearly they hold no definite opinion about the matter.

774 Though Nuer would not themselves bring the ideas of flesh,
828 life, and soul so neatly together, we can see that taken together they are covered by the concepts of both *pwony* and *ran*. *Pwony* means the whole creature, the individual or the self, what is one man and not another. '*Pwonyda*' is 'myself' and '*pwonyda pany*' is 'my very self'. *Ran* is what we may describe as 'the person', the social being as distinct from the individual creature. Its plural form *nath* is the word Nuer use to distinguish themselves from other peoples. They are *nei ti nath*, people (in the general sense of the word) who are people (in the sense of persons as Nuer think of themselves). *Pwony* is, as it were, the total organism, *ran* the total personality. As I have explained, a small child is the one but not

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the other, and twins are two *pwony* but a single *ran* (p. 128). However, the idea of the soul, as we have noted, seems to be attached chiefly to the concept of *ran*, to belong to the representation of a developed social being. An animal has, or is, a *pwony*, but it is not a *ran*, except in a purely figurative sense.

Nuer do not attribute souls to creatures other than man except perhaps cattle and elephants. They speak of the *tie* of a man at his mortuary ceremony going together with the *tie* of the sacrificed beast away from the living to wherever the ghosts may be, and since in sacrifice, especially in piacular sacrifice, there is an identification, discussed in a later chapter, between man and ox, it is understandable that, at any rate in sacrificial contexts, Nuer should speak of the souls of cattle. But though Nuer imply in relation to sacrifice that cattle have souls, they have no clearly formulated belief to that effect, and I am not sure that they would agree to the proposition if it were put to them as a question unrelated to sacrificial intention. Nevertheless, it may be supposed that since Nuer sometimes speak of an ox's *tie* they think that cattle have in some degree intelligence and will and a personality that survives death, however vague it may be.[1] Moreover, they speak of the ghosts as herding cattle in wherever it is they have their abode. That Nuer reflect on this question, and also that they are undecided about the answer to it, is shown by the fact that Dr. Smith, so she tells me, has often been asked by Nuer whether she thinks cattle have souls.

Though I have never heard Nuer speak of an elephant's *tie*, that it is thought to have one is implicit in the belief that if the rules about the division of the tusks of a slain elephant are not observed the dead beast may *gwor*, track down, those responsible (Dr. Lienhardt tells me that in Dinka the word means 'to take revenge'). *Gwor* has here, therefore, the same sense as *cien*, haunt. Also, Dr. Howell states that the man who first speared a slain elephant, and is therefore by a convention regarded as responsible for its death, has to have his right arm incised by a leopard-skin priest before he can eat or drink just as if he had slain a man, and a beast is sacrificed in the one case as in the other. He says

[1] That a cow in a kind of way can be thought of as a person is suggested by other facts. A rite is performed to separate twin cows, which are hence, unlike other beasts, regarded till then as being one, as human twins are. A rite is also performed, to prevent the calf sickening, when the first milk of its dam is taken for human consumption. See also Chap. X.

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further that when the tusks are removed they are first buried under the floor of a cattle byre before being cut up for distribution among such persons as have rights in them, and that when they are buried a sacrifice, called *kirpiny*, is made, the name of the sacrifice being the same as that made when a man is buried.[1]

The only occasions on which I have heard Nuer speak of creatures, other than cattle, or things having a *tie* was when they were discussing offerings of food and tobacco to fetishes, and in this case the usage was clearly metaphorical just as was their use of the word *cam*, to eat, in the same connexion. *Cam* is often used in a metaphorical sense to indicate that something is being appropriated, as when it is said of a man, usually a man with the evil eye or someone connected with the Government, that '*came nath*', 'he eats the people', that is, he takes something from, or exploits, the people. Nuer know very well that a fetish does not really eat the offerings. They only suppose that it in some way appropriates them, and since the offerings are obviously not materially appropriated they are more or less obliged to use the only available analogy and to speak of the fetish taking their 'souls'. Nuer do not attribute souls to food and tobacco, or to any other things. They are merely using the word in an attempt to explain their use in a very special and peculiar situation.

I have discussed this question partly because it was necessary to do so to make clear that in Nuer thought the soul is something essentially human which man has in addition to life, which he shares with other creatures, and partly because it is of some theoretical importance. In the light of the discussion it will be seen that the so-called animistic theory of religion, chiefly associated with the name of Tylor, cannot be sustained for the Nuer; since they are not animists and there is no evidence that they ever have been. But there is a further and more decisive reason for rejecting it. It supposes that the conception of Spirit derives and has developed from that of the soul, whereas in Nuer thought *kwoth*, Spirit, is something of quite a different nature from *tie*, soul. The soul is part of man and a created thing. Spirit is extrinsic to man, operating on him from outside him, and invasive. Nuer express the difference in nature between the human and the divine, between soul, or ghost, and Spirit when they say that 'God

[1] P. P. Howell, 'A Note on Elephants and Elephant Hunting among the Nuer', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1945, p. 100.

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is a person of the above (*ran nhial*)' and that man, or ghost, 'is a person of the below (*ran piny*)'. The difference, and the contrast, is clearly seen in the Nuer belief that the soul of a person struck by lightning is changed into Spirit. It is evident also in the way they speak about their prophets and about sick persons. They say that Spirit comes from above and enters into them or takes hold of them. Since, therefore, Spirit and soul are conceived of as of different natures, the conception of Spirit cannot be derived from a development of the conception of soul. On the contrary, it is precisely because God and man are thought of as quite different sorts of being that Nuer can think of themselves in relation to God and that God can be represented in different ways to different persons and social groups. Therefore it is necessary, if we wish not only to avoid confusion but also to seize upon the essential content of Nuer religious thought, that we should speak of the 'soul' and not of the 'Spirit' of man and of the 'ghosts' and not of the 'spirits' of the departed.

It follows from the Nuer orientation towards Spirit that they are little interested in the ghosts of the dead, so long as they cause no trouble. When people 'disappear'—Nuer avoid using the word 'die'—only one thing is certain, that they have departed for good. 'They dwell apart, they have become ghosts.' It is taken for granted that people have some sort of existence after death, though Nuer do not presume to know where they have it or what kind of life it is that they lead. Sometimes they say that they may be under the earth and live a life like that they lived when they were on earth amid their cattle and dung fires in villages and camps. This seems to be the general opinion and it is perhaps strengthened by the discovery, when digging wells, of goats' dung and fire-stones deep down in the earth, for I have heard Nuer say that maybe these belong to the ghosts. But Nuer also say of a dead man '*ce mat ka kwoth*', 'he has joined God', and '*ce tiede wa nhial, ca ringde kwony*', 'his soul has gone above, (only) his flesh was buried'. One often hears also the idea expressed that the dead have lost their relationship to the living and have therefore no further claims on them for attentions and services, and that they have instead 'become kin to God' or have 'become God's people'. Sometimes Nuer say that since the dead are near to God they can intercede with him on behalf of their families and relatives. However, no one supposes he can know where is the *wec indit*, the great